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SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/WE AND EUR/RPM  
DEFENSE FOR OSD/ISP (P. GRAFF)

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TAGS: PREL MARR AF SP NATO

SUBJECT: SPAIN: ISAF CAVEATS

REF: STATE 60862

Classified By: Political Counselor Kathleen M. Fitzpatrick,  
reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Senior Spanish Defense and Foreign Ministry officials said they will reevaluate the caveats placed on their forces in Afghanistan in light of Spain's new missions there: leading a PRT and an FSB in western Afghanistan. Current caveats on Spanish operations in Afghanistan will become obsolete as Spain takes on new missions in the western part of the country. If Spain maintains any caveats on their forces in the west, they will likely be will be as limited as possible and will not interfere with Spain's new missions, according to these officials. End summary.

¶2. (C) Polcouns and poloff discussed reftel demarche to Arturo Laclaustra, the Foreign Ministry's director general for terrorism, international and multilateral affairs, and the UN. We also raised the issue with Admiral Francisco Torrente, secretary general for defense policy at the Ministry of Defense. Both officials said the caveats the demarche dealt with are outmoded as a result of Spain's decision to move its forces to western Afghanistan to lead a provincial reconstruction team (PRT) and a forward support base (FSB).

¶3. (C) Laclaustra and Torrente each said the Spanish government would soon reevaluate the caveats to determine what, if any, would be appropriate for the new missions. They understood our point that caveats sometimes limited the local commander's flexibility in dealing with expected and unexpected contingencies. Torrente noted that some of the Spanish caveats are required for domestic political reasons and others, such as those relating to the type missions for which the troops have been trained and equipped, are not really caveats, but rather clarifications of their troops, training and capabilities.

¶4. (C) Laclaustra assured us that in any event, Spain "is fully committed to its missions in Afghanistan," and "will do what is needed to lead the PRT and FSB successfully." Torrente emphasized that Spain will ensure that no caveats interfere with Spain's ability to work effectively with other nations' forces or otherwise to lead the PRT or FSB.

¶5. (C) Torrente also noted that he thought it was unusual that ISAF command had never expressed concern about caveats to the Spanish, and that the U.S. was instead raising the issue. He thought it more appropriate for the matter to be dealt with via NATO channels.

¶6. (C) Comment: We think it unlikely that Spain will deploy to western Afghanistan with no caveats. The current political landscape in Spain will probably require the Spanish government to insert its national military authorities somewhere in the wiring diagram, at least for some of the troops' activities.

MANZANARES